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Neglected Arabia





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THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

# Neglected Arabia



QUARTERLY LETTERS AND NEWS

OF THE

# ARABIAN MISSION



NUMBER FIFTY-TWO, OCTOBER-DECEMBER, 1904

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# The Arabian Mission.

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# MISSIONARY LETTERS AND NEWS FROM ARABIA.

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October-December, 1904.

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WANTED.

THE PRESIDENT SPEAKS.

REV. MANCIUS H. HUTTON, D. D.

The delegation from the Board of Foreign Missions has just been looking over "Neglected Arabia" with intense interest. The earnest teaching and preaching, and still more, the faithful Christian living of our missionaries there, have begun to produce their expected results. The seed which seemed so idle has commenced to part the hard soil.

Now some things are wanted, wanted much, and wanted at once. You could not go into the school room at Bahrein, so small and so full that no pretense was made of offering the members of the delegation seats, and hear those eager voices recite, and see those eager eyes shine as they learned new things, and not become aware that more room is imperative. A schoolroom double the size of the present one is "wanted."

Then there is the chapel in the mission house. It is only ten by twenty feet. A room twenty by forty would be none too large. The present one does not pretend to hold the congregations which are beginning to assemble. People are willing to stand outside looking in at doorways and windows for a while; but you cannot expect that to keep up. A chapel room double the size of the present one is "wanted."

Will any one rise up and say, "Here they are?" There are people and churches who *can*.

BAHREIN.

## FRESH IMPRESSIONS OF MUSCAT.

REV. JAMES CANTINE.

One can often better appreciate a landscape if, after closing his eyes upon it for a time, he suddenly opens them for fresh and vivid impressions. Following the same reasoning, it may be that there is something new to be seen after having been away from Muscat for a year and a half. It can fairly be stated that if material things *do* look a little different from what they were before, it is not that they themselves have changed. For Muscat does not change—even the earthquake of last winter was not able to shake down any of its old and semi-ruined buildings. But perhaps that is too broad a statement, for there have been a few evident improvements. A fine residence for the English Consulate doctor, and new quarters for the telegraph operators have quite changed for the better the appearance of the narrow shore line as seen from the deck of an incoming steamer. A beautiful mosque almost completed will make me hereafter a little chary of expressing myself, as I often have done, about the decadence of religious feeling in Oman. A stranger in Muscat seeing this mosque told me that he was quite surprised to see us putting up such a fine *church*, and I had sorrowfully to tell him that it was not a Christian place of worship, and that our ambitions at present went no further than the filling of our own little chapel in our dwelling house.

Speaking of our own house, brings to mind its comforts and conveniences, and how different it was when I first landed here in the summer of 1891, and found quarters over an old storehouse, in the rooms where Bishop French spent the last few weeks of his life. Our present home is also a vast improvement over the little native house in which I found Peter Zwemer and his eighteen freed slaves when I stopped on my way back from my first furlough in 1896.

## MISSING FACES.

But although all the old buildings are here, some of the old faces are not. While I was at home Oman was again devastated by cholera, and several of my old friends among the natives were taken. Thanks to the efforts of the English authorities, it was not very bad here in the city, but up country, where a large part of the population clusters along the few running streams, so easily contaminated, it was particularly deadly. Our colporters say that their last tour was almost





VIEW OF MUSCAT.

disheartening. In one village only two living persons were found, and in others mourning for the dead, and disputes over a redivision of property, preoccupied the minds of most to the exclusion of any consideration of the gospel.

#### NATIVE HELPERS.

There had also been a little change in our force of native helpers, but I was very happy in greeting at least one tried worker. A great encouragement in re-entering the field here at Muscat is the assurance that our assistants have gained the respect of all and the friendship of so many. Especially the Sultan and others of the ruling classes seem to be attracted by the integrity and pure life of our Protestants. Too often Christianity among the natives has been represented only by some members of the Roman Catholic or Armenian churches, in the employ of the few foreigners here, who again and again have fallen under reproach and disgrace. We need not fear for the final result when the gospel is taught by life as well as by precept.

#### BRITISH INFLUENCE.

English influence also seems to have strengthened itself since I left, and while this does not directly help us, yet it means the breaking up of some prejudices and a certain preparation of the soil for a reception of the truth. Yet, away from the coast, the motives and methods of the English are misunderstood and disliked, and at times we feel that it is a distinct advantage to us that we can call ourselves Americans. The effect of a recent expedition down the coast, where the convicted murderers of a party of shipwrecked sailors were publicly executed, is yet to be seen. But, in general, there has been little recent change in political conditions in Oman, and so far as I can see, no indication that our paths inland will be either more or less free in the future than in the past.

#### PROMISING SYMPTOMS.

When we come to look directly at the work, the opportunities seem greater now than they were a year and a half ago. Not only are our old methods becoming more efficient, but new ones are offering. During my absence, Mr. Moerdyk had for the first time a promising class of men for English study, and only a few days ago one of the most influential Muslims of Muscat called upon me and asked if we would not start a school at which he could keep his boys instead of sending

them to Bombay. It would appear that now is the time to begin educational work in this section of our field. Again, we have, as never before, an opportunity for doing something among the women of Muscat. The advent of a white woman who can speak Arabic seems to have aroused considerable interest, and a number of native women have already been at the mission house to see for themselves. Mrs. Cantine hopes to pass her second year's examination in Arabic within a few months, and is looking forward to devoting a good share of her time to cultivating the field, broad and open, of woman's work for women in Oman. One of our best colporters is also bringing his family down from the north, and from this, the first native Christian home in Muscat, we hope will proceed a rich blessing.

Almost all the new impressions I have gained have been encouraging, but the best feature of all that which is newly spread before my eyes, is the realization that the Word is *taking root*. There are more than one now who profess a vital and abiding interest in the Christ. Our colporter, Ibrahim, was lately told by a group of men in a neighboring village, "Do not think that all your efforts have been in vain—that the gospel is having no entrance into our hearts. It is not so. We know what the truth is, and where it is, but what can we do? Can we lose our families, our children, our position, our property? Guarantee us freedom from persecution and then you will see!" This colporter, whom I never thought given to exaggeration, lately said in answer to a question, that he believed there were more than a score who wished to follow Christ. It is only the last step that remains to be taken—only to esteem Christ as the One above all price, for whom all else can be given up. May we who teach have grace given to us to rightly show them this, and may the Spirit, who alone is able, lead them to receive it.

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## NINE MONTHS MEDICAL WORK AT BAHREIN.

DR. LUCY M. PATTERSON.

The chief thing for which we give thanks in our work during the past nine months is the fact that we have had more in attendance at preaching than came for medical treatment. I believe this is the first time in the history of the medical work here that this has occurred.

One hundred and ninety-nine addresses were given on the men's side of the dispensary, and the same number on the women's side.

There have been over nine thousand patients, old and new, recorded at the out-clinics, and many of them were treated for more than one ailment, although only counted once. Fifty per cent. of the cases were medical, thirty per cent. surgical, and twenty per cent. were eye troubles.

We have had in nine months 116 in-patients, many of whom were successfully operated upon. The convalescent ones attended morning preaching in the dispensary, and every afternoon a service was held in the main ward. Thus many of the in-patients have a double opportunity of hearing the Word daily. Nor has that Word returned void unto Him. Many have been seeking earnestly the way of life. One of them has forsaken his family and renounced his worldly prospects, which were bright, for Christ's sake and, after instruction, was baptized on November 15th, publicly confessing his faith.

#### AN AWFUL EPIDEMIC.

Cholera began about the end of April, reached its climax in May, moderated in June and July, grew worse again in August, and took its departure in September. It is estimated that, out of a population of 30,000 in the villages of Menama and Moharek, about 3,000 were attacked, and over 2,000 died. In the most severe stage of the epidemic, all the hospital staff were pressed into service and some worked night and day.

Statistics would not convey much of an idea of the amount of work done by the whole mission staff during the cholera period. We were often too busy to record the visits to patients, and were frequently called out at night. Sometimes one of us would remain for hours in a home administering every kind of treatment to eliminate or control the poison of the disease and bring back the departing life; and sometimes one sat up all night.

No one, except those who have worked in a cholera epidemic under a tropical sun and who have seen the awful ravages of the disease, can realize the depression that comes, physical, mental and spiritual. Only the power of the Risen Christ can sustain in the trial.

We ask that all the friends of the mission offer special prayer for the success of the medical work at this juncture. The Mohammedans,



MASON MEMORIAL HOSPITAL, HAIKREIN

of the strictest sect, have contributed largely to the building of a dispensary—which is already in process of erection—to be carried on by the Indian government. The object of the Moslems is to have a place where they can be treated without listening to the Gospel. It is therefore a great joy for us at Bahrein to welcome the two doctors, Mr. and Mrs. Thoms, at this critical period.

May we all keep in mind the great commission: "All power is given unto Me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

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## EDUCATION IN BUSRAH.

REV. F. J. BARNY.

In the Turkish Empire education is mainly regarded as a function of the religious community. The law does indeed make provision for so-called "free" schools conducted by Ottoman or foreign persons, but permits for such schools are not easily obtained. The community is the organization through which the Turkish government rules its non-Moslem subjects. Each Jew, Catholic, Armenian or Protestant must be registered somewhere—all persons in any one place of one faith constituting the community of that place. Such communities are mainly tax-collecting agencies, but they have certain privileges such as caring for their own poor and providing schools for their children. Thus, the Jews of Busrah have their own school, as also the Catholics. The latter are not numerous enough to warrant much effort on their behalf, but the former, aided by the Rothschild Fund, have, under normal conditions, a prosperous institution offering to Jewish children what they most desire, viz., instruction in Hebrew, so that they can read the Hebrew Bible, and in Arabic, English, arithmetic and geography. Enough of these latter branches is given to cover the needs of business. If in any place there are strong communities of different sects and religions, and they all have schools, as they naturally do, there is rivalry which tends to improve the schools. In Busrah, however, there is no competition and standards are low.

My purpose in writing is, however, rather to describe the educational facilities offered to Muslims. The Turkish government has a Department of Education which establishes schools in needy places and promotes their efficiency. These schools are graded, and, according to the published reports and schedules, the courses of study are extended and liberal. But like Turkish reforms, which exist mostly on paper, are these courses of study. In a place of the size and importance of Busrah there is but one government school offering facilities for about one hundred children. The course of study covers a period of five years and includes, besides the Koran, Turkish, French, Arabic, arithmetic and geography. The text-books are prescribed and all come from Constantinople. This school uses fourteen different books in its five years' course. If school facilities for Muslims depended alone on the Turkish government, illiteracy would reign almost supreme.

#### PRIVATE SCHOOLS.

But one of the agreeable surprises for the new missionary is learning how large a percentage of both men and women are able to read. Where do they learn? Any *mullah*, *i. e.*, teacher, may gather as many pupils as he likes or can and hold his school wherever convenient. Frequently a shop in the bazar is hired and thus what goes on is open to the observation of all and the scholars may change the monotony of study by observing the life of the bazar. The little boys are seated on the ground with little stools before them on which lie the Koran text-books. They repeat the words and sentences after their teacher, swaying their bodies to the rhythm of the words, each repeating something different, the mullah apparently having many ears to follow so many voices, for he detects the slightest error of any of his thirty or forty pupils. They learn also the intricacies of Arabic writing, beginning with a large hand and then, as they get the swing, writing neat sentences. Women mullahs teach the girls usually in their houses, and the wealthy may have mullahs for their own children. Thus the masses of Islam are saved from illiteracy. The desire and the duty of reading the Koran are probably the strongest motives in seeking this elementary instruction. We cannot call it an education. It does not save from ignorance. The average boy of twelve at home knows more of history and science than the average man here. Nor is there any moral value to it. In fact, the educated man among Moslems as we meet him is either an

intense bigot or an atheist. The Arab, as well as the cosmopolitan, of Busrah is not averse to education nor of deficient mental calibre. The opportunities, judging by the need, are wonderful, and if the necessary permit from the government can be secured, I will do all in my power to meet the need.

### OUR DEPUTATION.

The letter from Dr. Hutton shows that the Deputation reached Arabia. Muscat and Bahrein were visited, but Busrah was out of reach in the time allowed.

This picture was taken at Bahrein.



EXPLANATION.—In the back row, from left to right : Mrs Bennett, Mrs. Hutton, Dr. Cobb, Dr. Zwemer, Mr. Moerdyk, Dr. Thoms, Alfred Olcott, Dr. Hutton, Mr. Barny. In front : Bessie, Raymond and Mrs. Zwemer, Mrs. Olcott and Lois Thoms, Mrs. Thoms and Wells, Dr. Patterson and Frances Thoms.

The following very interesting notes are from Dr. Cobb's personal letters :

#### MUSCAT MISSION HOUSE.

The lower story of the house is occupied by a reception-room for native callers. with pegs in the wall on which the Arab visitors hang



their guns. This story was formerly used by Peter Zwemer for his slave boys' school. It lent a sort of pathetic interest to it to find fragments of slate pencil on the floor, and one of the boys, named Henry, in Mr. Cantine's employ. Another room on this floor is a neat little chapel, where service is held each Sunday in Arabic and in English. On leaving the building for the ship, we passed through this chapel, and it was a pleasure, at Mr. Cantine's request, to offer prayer for these secluded and self-denying workers, their helpers and the people for whom they are working.

The living rooms are upstairs, and are roomy, high-ceiled and very pleasant. Whatever may be thought of the outlook, at least they have an outlook and so plenty of light and also of air, when any air is stirring, and are not shut in by surrounding walls. The veranda is a noble one, and Mrs. Cantine had tea served there about four o'clock. There, too, we received a call from the two colporters, who came to pay their respects to Dr. Hutton and myself. We had quite a talk with them, and were much impressed by their intelligence, courage and faith. One of them at least has frequently been in peril of his life, not long ago having escaped being poisoned by refusing to take the first cup of coffee at the hands of a sheik, by whom he was being entertained. It is said never to be safe to take the first cup, as that is the easiest one to put poison in. The first should be taken by the host as the guarantee of safety.

I asked Mrs. C. if she had got reconciled to Muscat. "Why, Dr. Cobb, I love it." We asked Mr. C. if there was anything he specially wanted or needed. "Our greatest need is more and better helpers and money to give them better salaries."

It is pleasant, also, to notice how highly all the officers who know them esteem our missionaries, and how highly they speak of them.

#### AT BAHREIN.

Thus ends our first day on shore, and a voyage of 10,226 miles, in six different steamers, without sickness, mishap or accident, with smooth seas and clear skies, two days only, excepted. This record is, I think, remarkable, and something for which we are very thankful.

We all went over to the hospital, which is about a quarter of a mile from the house. The building is not imposing, but makes a good impression, looking cool, clean and airy in the midst of heat and squalor. The windmill was hard at work, and I was glad to see the

ground in the inclosure (surrounded by a high wall) divided into sections which can be watered and planted with shrubs and young trees, which, if they do well, will make the compound a beautiful garden. We went through the various wards and operating rooms, and waited for the opening of the day's work. Mr. Moerdyk gave an earnest address and offered prayer, all the patients being gathered in the waiting-room to hear. Then one by one they filed into the room, where Dr. Zwemer, sitting at his desk, took down the numbers of those who presented cards received on a former visit, and entered in a book the names and nationality of the newcomers. Then they passed on into the dispensary, or the ulcer ward, as their cases demanded. Dr. Thoms was cordially greeted by his old friends, and immediately took up his old work. It was interesting, though repulsive, to watch them as they passed. The number of ulcers was amazing and their appearance frightful. I soon had enough.

From the hospital we went back to the house and saw the little school of about thirty children (not all present owing to Ramadan), Arabs, Jews and Christians. The room is about the same size as the chapel, and altogether too small for the purpose. The scholars sang hymns in Arabic and English, and went through various exercises to their and our satisfaction. After inspecting the school we visited the book-shop in the bazaar, kept by a very interesting old man, from Mosul, I think, named Gerges, with whom I managed to carry on a little fragmentary conversation in Syriac, of which he knew a little, but far less than I. He is a venerable looking man, of benign countenance and cordial manner, well adapted, I should think, for the position. Quite a number of people came into the shop or gathered at the doors and windows, attracted by our presence. Owing to Ramadan, when the Mohammedans fast all day and feast all night, the crowds were not so large as they would have been at any other time, and were perfectly quiet and respectful. This would not have been possible in the earlier years of Dr. Zwemer's residence. Then he and his helpers were met with scowling looks, opprobrious epithets, stones and filth showered upon them from the upper stories. No evidence could be more conclusive as to the wisdom, courage and faith with which the work has been done or as to the blameless and consistent lives of the native Christians, to say nothing of the missionaries.

As the evening became cooler we all started, about five o'clock, for

a ride out of the city and to some date gardens, on donkeys. We made quite a cavalcade, and as several of the donkeys had bells, we had music wherever we went. It was refreshing to get out of the hot, dirty town, to the purer air of the open and among the palm trees. While we were gone, a riot occurred between the Arabs and Persians on some absurd pretext or other, in which 2,000 were said to be engaged, and nine Persians very badly wounded, one fatally, it is thought. Just after dinner Dr. Thoms was sent for to attend the wounded. He returned about nine o'clock for instruments or remedies, and took Alfred Olcott with him to assist. There is said to be great jealousy between these two classes or nationalities here, and bouts are frequent though not often so serious or on so large a scale.

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### FARTHEST NORTH IN OMAN.

REV. JAMES E. MOERDYK.

While traveling from Muscat to Bahrein, and at anchor off the town of Debai on the Oman, or Old Pirate, coast, we picked up two colporters belonging to Bahrein station. They came aboard to return to the station after an absence of forty days spent in touring along the coast above named. They visited three different districts, and tarried at seven different towns along a coast of seventy-five miles in length, going farther north than we have been for five or six years. This last district farthest north is inhabited by a people apparently of Arab extraction, but their language is strange, as are many of their customs. Those living on the sea front speak Arabic as well as their own language; inland they know only this strange tongue, which the Arabs describe as similar to the chattering of birds, and all of us who have heard it quite agree with the verdict. The colporters sold eighteen copies of Scripture in that district, which, if read by the few who understand Arabic, may be by them interpreted to their brothers and friends. The total sales of our friends during the tour were III copies of Scripture. The work was not without hardships and persecutions, so that more than once they were tempted to give up, but after all is told they rejoice that they were permitted to toil and suffer for Christ's sake.

#### CAREFUL CONCLUSIONS.

What effect is the work having upon the people in these districts? I think we may gather from experiences during this last tour:

1. That we are not rebuffed and persecuted because we are Christians, but because we are aggressive in circulating the Word and witnessing for Christ. A Christian who is willing to "rough it" might settle in the larger towns to do business with the people and not be molested except for petty sneers and remarks, but the missionary must expect harder treatment. Arabs who were friends, outwardly at least, because of medicines and favors received, now seem to hang back and to give us the "cold shoulder," so that the future may mean a bolder and firmer stand for the Truth's sake.

2. That opposition does not originate with those who have bought and *read* the Scriptures, but with those who have false Islamic ideas concerning the Bible, and aroused by hypocritical zealots, seek to shut out the poisonous literature. Our colporters tell of finding copies of the Gospel neatly kept wrapped in cloth covers. Some of these, it is true, were kept as charms against the evil one, but their owners could read, and did read the books and were friendly to those who brought them. In one town there lives an old man who at every visit of the colporters insists on buying a different portion of the Bible. He cannot read himself, but calls his children and friends to read to him. The Book is in demand, and sales were most numerous in the town where opposition was strongest.

3. We think that we have good reason to believe that several in this district are searching the Scripture and feeling after truth. Four years ago we met a young man who seemed very eager to know the truth and read all the Christian literature we could give him. A year later when we met him, he secretly confessed his faith in Christ and asked for more instruction. Later he was always a Nicodemus when colporters visited the place; and they felt greatly encouraged about him, although he never left off his Moslem prayers and ritual, but claimed that God could read his heart and would accept his prayers. This year our helpers learned that he had died of cholera. There are several others, besides the old man already referred to, who are reading and ask questions when our helpers come to the towns. God knows His own and will perfect His work.



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